

REMARKS

Claims 2, 4-7, 9, and 15-23 are pending. Claims 1, 3, 8 and withdrawn claims 10-14 have been canceled. The applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of this application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

The application has been amended to be placed into condition for allowance with the claims which were indicated as allowable if rewritten. More particularly, on page 3 of the office action, dependent claims 2, 4, 7, 16-17, 19 and 20 were objected to, but indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Claims 2, 7 and 19 have been re-written in independent form to include claim 1, and claim 1 was canceled. Also, claims dependent from claim 1 (i.e., claims 9, 15, and 21) have been amended to depend from claim 2. Furthermore, claim 15 has been copied as new claims 22-23 which depend from allowable independent claims 7 and 19.

Claims 4, 16, 17, and 20 and have been re-written in independent form to include claim 3, and claim 3 was canceled. Also, claims dependent from claim 3 (i.e., claims 5, 6, and 18) have been amended to depend from claim 4.

It is respectfully submitted that claims 2, 4, 7, 16-17, 19 and 20 as rewritten are allowable. Although two new claims 22-23 have been added, it is noted that two finally rejected claims have been canceled and that these new claims are identical to an existing claim and depend from rewritten allowable independent claims. In view of the above, the applicant submits that the claims are patentable.

The applicants have rewritten the claims in independent form since the office action indicated that claims 2, 4, 7, 16-17, 19 and 20 would be allowable if so re-written. However, the applicants do not concede that other features in the claims are found in the prior art. The

applicants wish to clarify for the record, if necessary, that the claims have been amended to expedite prosecution. Moreover, the applicants reserve the right to pursue the original subject matter in a continuation application.

Any narrowing amendment to the claims in the present Amendment is not to be construed as a surrender of any subject matter between the original claims and the present claims; rather this is merely an attempt at providing one or more definitions of what the applicants believe to be suitable patent protection. In addition, the present claims provide the intended scope of protection that the applicants are seeking for this application. Therefore, no estoppel should be presumed, and the applicants' claims are intended to include a scope of protection under the Doctrine of Equivalents.

For all the reasons advanced above, the applicants respectfully submit that the claims as amended are allowable.

Claims 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 15, 18 and 21 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) or 35 USC 103(a). These claims have been canceled or amended to depend from rewritten allowable claims. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that the rejections are moot.

The applicants respectfully request entry of the present amendment for the following reasons. First, the amendments are for matters of form raised by the examiner and place the claims into form for allowance. Second, the amendments to the claims do not raise new issues requiring further search since the amendments either involve canceling claims, copying an existing claim, or rewriting claims into independent form. Third, the applicants respectfully submit that no new matter has been introduced. Fourth, the amendments correct formality requirements. Finally, although new claims are submitted, at least the same number of finally

rejected claims were canceled. Accordingly, the applicants respectfully request entry of the present Amendment.

In view of the foregoing, the applicants submit that this application is in condition for allowance. A timely notice to that effect is respectfully requested. If questions relating to patentability remain, the examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone.

If there are any problems with the payment of fees, please charge any underpayments and credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 50-1147.

Respectfully submitted,



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